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The "Virginia" - 1879

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THE GIFT OF
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OF BOSTON

THE STORY
OF THE
Confederate States' Ship "Virginia."

(ONCE MERRIMAC.)

HER VICTORY OVER THE MONITOR.

BORN MARCH 7th. DIED MAY 10th, 1862.

SIC ITER AD ASTRA.

BALTIMORE:
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Harvard College

THE STORY
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CONFEDERATE STATES' SHIP "VIRGINIA,"
(ONCE MERRIMAC.)

AN article in the *Army and Navy Journal*, June 13th, entitled *The "Monitor" and the "Merrimac,"* is one of the very choicest specimens yet produced of the Northern mode of manufacturing history. A grand victory is claimed for the "*Monitor*," whereas a more palpable, undeniable defeat shall never have been recorded in naval history. The proofs are being prepared by those who were actors in the drama, who will produce facts and figures, chapter and verse, bearings and distances. In the meantime here is a brief statement (written hastily and from memory), by a Confederate soldier, who, from a *safe position* saw the fight. It is intended only as a light four-pounder rocket; several 200 pound chilled bolts, conical, will follow. We must *now* settle all disputed questions and reach the *facts*, for it is time that the great fight should pass into history.

It remains to be seen whether it would not have been wiser in the Federals to have remained content, with our tacit acquiescence (to our shame be it said), in their brazen claim, as at first slowly and insidiously set up, to a "drawn battle."

And here I would observe that the writer shows the stereotyped Yankee passion for ringing all the changes upon the word "Rebel" and its compounds. Now, we Confederates, often see in print "the foul dishonoring word" (only less offensive than traitorous renegade), and hear it sometimes used in a general collective way, but individually applied, and *viva voce*, we never hear it. Curious!!

And first, a few words as to the *Virginia*. The Federals, previous to their flight from Norfolk, had burnt all the United States

Government vessels; and we, taking from the mud the hulk of the frigate *Merrimac*, built over it a roof of two-inch iron plates, and cleaning up the hull and overhauling the engines, we formally named the new craft "*Virginia*," as we hauled her out of dock, and that model sailor and gentleman, the gallant Buchanan, took command. She was put up in the roughest way; but the fatal defect in her construction was, that the iron shield extended only a few inches below the water-line. A shell or two amidships, between wind and water (she had no knuckle), and her career was closed. She drew 22 feet of water, was in every respect ill-proportioned and top-heavy; and what with her immense length and wretched engines (than which a more ill-contrived, spraddling and unreliable pair were never made,—failing on one occasion while the ship was under fire,) she was little more manageable than a timber-raft.

In his report to Com. Tattnal, April 5th, '62, Chief Engineer Ramsay says: "The engines gave out yesterday, as I had occasion to report to you, after running only a few hours; and as I cannot insure their working any length of time consecutively, I deem it my duty to make this report. Each time that we have gone down to the Roads I have had to make repairs, which could not have been done aboard ship very well, or, if done at all, would have required a great deal of time."

The quarters for the crew were damp, ill-ventilated and unhealthy; one-third of the men were always on the sick-list, and upon being transferred to the hospital, they would convalesce immediately. She steered *very* badly, and both her rudder and screw were wholly unprotected. Her battery was magnificent, of course, for Catesby Roger Jones had planned and equipped it; and that he had no peer in this branch of his profession (ordnance), I believe that every fair man in the "old navy" will concede.

The day after our return to Norfolk, in reply to the question, addressed individually, to every officer and seaman of each division, they said, to a man, that they were unable to suggest *any*,—the *slightest* alteration, which would increase the efficiency of the battery; not so much as by the twisting, or untwisting of a rope yarn.

After the *Virginia* had annihilated the Federal fleet, and beaten off the *Monitor*, our people, who, outside of naval circles, knew nothing whatever of her construction, expected her to accomplish all manner of impossible absurdities. She was first to take Washington,

then New York, and after raising the blockade of the Southern ports, she was to rival the splendid career of the *Alabama*. The truth was, that the ship was not weatherly enough, to move in Hampton Roads, at all times, with safety, and she never should have been found more than three hours sail from a machine shop. The wildest suggestions were gravely urged upon the Navy Department; but I remember that the *Monitor* was never considered the smallest obstacle to her movements, inland or seaward. We considered *her*, as she proved to be, *hors du combat*.

With this huge, unwieldy make-shift, then, and (so characteristic of Buchanan's *dash*, without the slightest trial or experimental trip for we had only warped her from dock to dock), officered with the very cream of the old navy, and manned by as gallant a crew as ever fought in a good cause—Southern born almost to a man—we steamed out on that beautiful Saturday morning, freighted down to the very guards, with the tearful prayers and hopes of a whole people, heroically struggling against overwhelming odds, to dissolve a hated political partnership, into which they had been inveigled, and which had now become *noisome* and *incestuous*—and fighting to the death, *only* that they might govern their own soil in their own way. Every man and officer well understood the desperate hazards of the approaching fight; the utter feebleness of their ship, and the terrible efficiency of the enemy's magnificent fleet. Most of them had taken, as they supposed, a last farewell of wives, children, friends, and had set in order their worldly affairs. All the lieutenants (Jones excepted) shortly before, and for the first time, had in their respective churches—Protestant and Catholic—publicly partaken of the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Of the devotedness, of the unselfish, patriotic purity of motive, which now led them, to give their lives to their Country, the Searcher of all hearts knew.

She had been so crowded, with mechanics from the yard, that there had been little opportunity to drill or exercise the crew. Up to the very hour of sailing, she had been swarming with workmen, and she was *actually in motion* as the last of them, and the writer jumped ashore. Says Lieutenant Eggleston in a letter, "We thought we were going upon an ordinary trial trip. I know of no other officer except John Taylor Wood, who would have wound up a trial trip as our grand old Hero, Buchanan, did in Hampton Roads that day."

It had just gone three bells, and the vessel having passed the obstructions, Buchanan addressed his crew:—"Sailors:—In a few moments you will have the long expected opportunity for showing your devotion to our cause. Remember that you are about to strike for your country, for your wives, your children, your homes, for the right. Beat to quarters." And now, before fifty minutes have elapsed, we are at Newport News, where lie at anchor the *Cumberland* and *Congress*; hurrying up from Old Point in all "the pride and pomp and circumstance of glorious war," we see the splendid frigates *Minnesota*, and *Roanoke* and *St. Lawrence*. About 3 P.M., we began the fight with a shot from our bow gun; it killed and wounded ten men at the after pivot gun of the *Cumberland*. Our second shot killed and wounded twelve men at her forward pivot gun. Both guns were pointed and fired by Lt. Chas. Simms. We give the *Congress* a broadside as we pass, which was handsomely returned, but the pilot at the wheel has drawn a bead upon the *Cumberland*, and holds her true as the needle for the doomed ship. It is just a little past slack water, and the *Cumberland*, having swung around about three-quarters, is lying slightly athwart the stream and is just about tautening her cable to the young flood. She gives us another splendid broadside as we near her. Relentless as Fate we rush down upon her, and crushing through the barricade of heavy spars (torpedo fenders), we strike below the starboard fore chains and crash far into her hull. The chief engineer, waiting with intense anxiety to reverse the engines, as ordered, could not fix upon the instant of concussion, so slight had been the shock to us.

We back off, and now, the blue waters are rushing in, to fill the cavern, we have made in the beautiful frigate; she reels, and rolls, and staggers, and now the waves engulf her, carrying down that hated flag,—to us, the emblem of so much wrong, and oppression, and sorrow.

Delicious recollection! She was at the bottom within twenty minutes after we struck, and was so gallantly fought, that in that time, she did us more damage than all the rest of the Yankee fleet together—*Monitor* included. We head up stream a short distance, in order that we may turn and come down upon the *Congress*. In the hope that we had retired from the unequal fight, there was great Yankee cheering ashore and afloat. It was soon changed to lamentation and flight. Terrified at the fate of their consort, they make

it a case of *saue qui peut*,—did those skedaddling warriors, who with music and banners, had just now come sailing down so proudly to fight us. In their terrified flight, they plump the *Congress* and *Minnesota* ashore, the *Roanoke* and *St. Lawrence* succeed in making their escape. And now we have closed with the *Congress*, deliberately taking position just under her counter. Her flag soon comes down the by run. Two surrender flags are run up, and her officers delivering up their swords, entreat that they may return, to assist in getting their wounded out of the ship. Permission is given by Buchanan, but they *never return*.

In defiance of the usages of war as observed, even among savages, a sharp fire is kept up from the shore batteries, wounding Admiral Buchanan, Lieutenant Minor and five of their own men, now our prisoners. We reply to this outrage with hot shot and incendiary shell, and very soon the *Congress* makes a brilliant bon-fire to illumine the Roads. And now for the *Minnesota*. But just here a precious hour and more is lost through a distressing error on our side; and the pilots, nervous and timid, in the absence of all lights and buoys, insist upon bringing the ship to anchor while yet the daylight lasts. Our anchor is down under Sewell's Point, our ship *unscratched by a pin*, and in the hope that "all's well" with our noble old wounded Captain, the night wears tranquilly away. The fire of the *Cumberland* had killed two men and wounded fourteen, and had also carried away the muzzles of two guns, but we never ceased firing them, and the damage was wholly immaterial.

It was deemed of importance that no vessel of our little fleet should leave the Roads that night, and so, at about dusk, the writer, who had volunteered, took charge of the prisoners from the *Congress*. They were twenty-three (23), of whom five (5) had been badly wounded by the *Yankee fire*. After a long pull against a strong ebb tide, and a very anxious one—the *unencumbered* prisoners numbering eighteen (18), and the *encumbered* boats' crew numbering nine (9)—they were landed before midnight at the Naval Hospital in Norfolk, two of the wounded prisoners (marines) having died in the Signal Corps gig, just before reaching the landing stage.

In the early morning we land our Admiral, sorely stricken, but cheery and game as a lion, and as soon as the barge of the *Patrick Henry* returns from the duty, with our ship in "inspection order," Jones, who has succeeded to the command, gets

under way to finish the *Minnesota*. Next comes the *Patrick Henry* (once *Yorktown*), commanded by Admiral John Randolph Tucker, our Princely sailor Knight, "so stuffed with all honorable virtues," and next in the *Jamestown* comes our own gallant Barney, Baltimore born; and hovering about us are our dashing little mosquito fleet, under Webb, and Parker, and Alexander. We soon descry a strange-looking iron tower sliding over the waters towards us, but it bears a hated flag, and we dash at it. It is the *Monitor*, which, during the previous night, had come in from sea, and which, by the light of the burning *Congress*, had been seen and reported by one of our pilots. In the strong, Anglo-Saxon which all good pilots affect, he remarked to a midshipman of the watch, "There goes that d—d Ericsson," which we knew all about from Yaukce newspapers.

She had been in momentary danger of foundering during the twenty-four hours passage from Sandy Hook to Cape Henry, and in ordinary reef topsail breeze.

And now the great fight has begun, and Commodore Parker's account of it is substantially correct and fair. It will be remembered that this was the first engagement of iron-clads in the World's History. During the Crimean War two or three French ships had been partially shod with iron, but they were never brought into action, and the experiment had as yet, therefore, yielded no practical results. Old things had passed away, and in an instant, as it were, the experiences of "a thousand years of battle and of breeze" were brought all to naught—its lessons to be unlearned and forgotten. In a new volume and upon a virgin page was the art of naval warfare being recorded.

Nearly two hours have passed, and many a shell and shot have been exchanged at close quarters, with no perceptible damage to either. The *Virginia* is discouragingly cumbrous and unwieldy. To wind her for her broadside fire, each fire, fifteen minutes are lost; while, during all this time, the *Monitor* is whirling around and about like a top, and by the easy working of her turret, and her precise and rapid movement, elicits the wonder and admiration of all. The ships passed and re-passed very near each other; frequently we delivered our broadside at the distance of only a few yards, and with no greater perceptible effect than if we had thrown marbles at her.

Coming down from the spar deck and observing a division standing "at ease," Jones observed, "why are you not firing Mr. Eggleston." "Why, our powder is very precious," replied the Lieutenant, "and after two hours incessant firing I find that I can do her just about as much damage, by fashing my thumb at her every two minutes and a half."

The fight had not lasted ten minutes, before Jones knew very well (and which no other man in the ship knew) that our chances were as an orange against all Lombard street. Of all the human beings afloat that day in Hampton Roads, Catesby Jones was, perhaps, the only one capable of comprehending the situation at a glance. In addition to his thorough professional training, theory and practice, he had conducted an exhaustive series of experiments, with iron-shod targets, near Norfolk, and knew that our double two-inch iron plates as against the XI-inch guns of the *Monitor*, were a mere sham and a pretence; about the same protection that two sheets of tin would afford a target, against a rifle at point blank range. And he knew, too, that the turret of the *Monitor* was impenetrable to our shot or shell, or to the fire of any other artillery of that day; and so he determines to waste no more time with his guns. She is *certainly* invulnerable to our *shell*, and we had but twenty solid shot on board. They were of nine-inch diameter, of very great windage, of course, and intended to be used as hot shot for wooden vessels.

Our next move therefore, is to *run her down*. A tedious manœuvring for position; now "back the engines"—now "go ahead"—now "hard a-starboard the helm"—now "hard a-port"—weary, weary minutes—an eighth of a mile of the Red River raft, with plenty of sweeps, would be more lively in handling. At last, we have way on her, and we ram her with all our force. But she is so flat and broad that she merely *slides* away under our stem as a floating door would slip away before the cut water of a barge; all that we could do was to *push* her. At sea and in smooth water, *provided she chose to remain still*, we could, no doubt, have run over her. It required a full mile, under full steam, to get full headway on the *Virginia*; we never had one-half the requisite space, and consequently the blow was weak and inefficient. We could not knock a hole in the *Monitor*, for our prow, which with inconceivable stupidity, had been made of cast-

iron, had been knocked off, of course, when we opened the bowels of the *Cumberland*; and besides, at the water line the *Monitor* had six feet of solid timber, heavily plated with iron, while our cast prow was but five feet long. Jones now determines to board her; to choke her turret in some way, and lash her to the *Virginia*.

The gunners and the armorers gang have all their posts assigned; some have heavy sledge-hammers; others have large wedges and crow-bars, bits of heavy chain, spikes and bolts, and whatever was thought available to wedge the turret and keep it from revolving.

In such case the *Monitor* is harmless and we have captured her. Some have large flasks of turpentine, and others have balls of oakum saturated with the same; some have a slow match, and some have torches. If we can get the combustibles through the top grating of the turret, we may suffocate the crew in it, or possibly may set the ship on fire and blow her up. About twenty men of the boatswain's gang, have manned the heavy hawsers and chain cables; if we can lash her securely to the *Virginia*, we can walk away with her to Norfolk, whether the turret revolves or not.

At last, the enemy is dead ahead, and we see by the bubbles which dance past the ports that we are getting "way" on her.

Faster and faster, and nearer and nearer, and the fighting crew, with pistols and boarding pikes, and well sharpened cutlasses are burning for the signal to swarm aboard the foe.

Faster and faster, and nearer and nearer;—within twenty minutes the Confederate colors shall fly from the *Monitor's* peak, by the sheer force of brains and seamanship and heroism and the juster cause. A breathless hush pervades the ship, for a single stroke of the bell is heard; the monster engines are stilled; and now, the blood is fairly tumbling through our veins as the shrill pipes and hoarse roar of the boatswains, call "boarders away," but the enemy has also heard the call for "Pr'ythee see there! behold! look! lo!! the *Monitor* is off, has wheeled in flight, has turned tail and fled, and ignominiously seeks refuge on a mud-flat; or, to speak, perhaps, with more euphony and elegance, and in the language of Commodore Parker, "has hauled off into shoal water," where she is as safe from our ship as if she were on the topmost peak of the Blue Ridge. Ten feet draught of water against twenty-two. The flying foe is moving two feet to our one but, rapidly firing, we chase her until we have no longer an inch of water under our keel—we have been brought up, all standing by the shoal.

From the commencement of her flight, the *Monitor* had made no reply to our fire, and now her nimble heels have secured her a place of safety, miles distant, on Hampton Shoals. Although the great distance made it a waste of precious ammunition, yet, by way of emphasizing our victory—putting it in italics, as it were—we fired five more shell at her. As well as we could distinguish, three of them struck, but the last two, though fired from our pivot gun, could not reach, *and to none of them did we get any reply*. Let this fact be specially marked, to wit:—the *Monitor*, seeking safety in flight, and anchoring where she could float, and where we could not, made no reply to the last guns fired on that day. When she wheeled to fly, she had fired the last hostile gun at the *Virginia*, which a short time afterwards, drove her again from the field, when she was bombarding our batteries. A little later still, she was severely beaten at Drury's Bluff, principally by the crew of the burnt *Virginia*; and then, leaving Hampton Roads to take part in Butler's fire-works at Wilmington, she went to the bottom, *handsomely*, off Cape Hatteras.

“Most incompetent conclusion—most inglorious career.”

But the *Monitor*, now on the shoal, had once before run out of the fight, for the purpose, Commodore Parker tells us, “of hoisting up her shot, weighing 168 pounds” (a most remarkable proceeding for a full manned war-ship); and in the hope that she may return once more, the *Virginia* waits for about thirty-five minutes. But she clings to the flat and makes no “sign;” and having thus beaten her fairly, squarely and absolutely, the *Virginia* goes on her way rejoicing. Commodore Parker admits that the *Monitor* ran off, but “finding her injuries not so serious,” she “turned her head towards the enemy,” who “turned” his head towards Norfolk, and “left the field pursued by the *Monitor*.” Now the *Monitor* was a long way off, nearly three miles, and we cannot gainsay the assertion that she “turned” towards us; but that she “turned” and came out into deep water to give battle, or that the *Virginia* “turned” in consequence, or that the *Monitor* ever “pursued” her an inch, or pretended to pursue, or that by firing a gun, or in any other way she ever gave the slightest indication of a wish to renew the fight, I wholly and utterly deny. I pronounce the statement absolutely untrue in gross and in detail. I laugh it to scorn and dare its author to the proof. Some proof that she was ever again, for a single instant, within two

miles of the *Virginia* until more than two months afterwards, we were compelled to burn our ship by reason of military movements ashore; remembering always that while she might freely come to us, we might not go to her. *Much "turning" there may have been, but there was no "pursuit."* There are five thousand credible witnesses of the fact, that when we left Hampton Roads that day there was *nothing in sight to fight*. True, the colors of the *Minnesota* were still at her peak, but she was so thoroughly beaten, that, as every Northern man knows, Van Brunt was with great difficulty dissuaded from abandoning her, by the influence of outside spectators. She was aground, and entirely at our mercy, and it seemed merciless to fire another shot at her. We no more considered her a hostile element in the fight, than if she had been a toy ship. And just here I would note an incident. While the crews of the *Cumberland* and *Congress* were struggling to reach the shore, in boats and by swimming, a few charges of grape and canister, would have swept them from the waters—not a man would have reached the shore alive. By Buchanan's peremptory order, not a shot was fired.

But the *Monitor* is now, *admittedly*, on the shoal to examine her wounds; the *onus* is on her to *prove* that she came off it to *fight*. *Wanted* the bearings and distance of the *Virginia* when the *Monitor* "*pursued*;" and *wanted more*, said bearings and distances and *soundings* when she turned from that "*pursuit*" to play that "*defensive rôle*." The issue is just here, and it is in a nutshell, and there is no dodging it. We charge that she never left the shoal *for an instant* to give battle, and that she *was never again that day, nor—any other day—within three miles of the Virginia* or in four fathoms of water, while a Confederate vessel was in sight, or out side the bar. The smoke of one signal gun from the *Monitor*, and we would have wheeled to fight her, although within one hundred yards of our dock. We sailed our ship to *fight*, and not to "*protect vast interests by a defensive rôle*."

The *Monitor being beaten off*, in what more impressive manner could Catesby Jones "*show his fealty to the cause which he had espoused*?" (his devotion to which is the pride and joy of his life, as it is to all of us). No respectable man on board the *Monitor* will deny that the *Virginia* fired the last shots, or that the *Monitor* ran off into shoal water, where our shell could not reach her. If, at this instant, the victory was not ours, whose was it? or how long was i

to be in abeyance? Six hours? or six weeks? or six years? By way, however, of putting a clinching nail in this mythical "pursuit;" if the *Monitor*, leaving the flat, was *really* looking for a fight, why did she not find it during the ensuing nine weeks, when the *Virginia* was roaming about the Roads, using every possible effort to coax her into a struggle, but in vain? "Discretion" was "the better part of valor," and *we never met her again*. "He that fights and runs away will live to fight another day," but that "other day" *never dawned* for the *Monitor*. To make our appeal the more impressive, to shame her into a fight, as it were, Barney, in the *Jamestown*, ran over to the Hampton side and cut out three vessels under her very nose; but she was not to be coaxed from her earthworks; she was inexorable, and our grand old Sea-king Tatnall, that chevalier, *sans peur et sans reproche* was in despair. Nobody *could* "get wounded" for nobody *would* fight him. At last, he determined to capture her by stratagem, but the plan was found to be impracticable. He could only taunt her by the daily display of the Confederate colors, and a daily invitation to battle. And so much for the "pursuing" *Monitor*.

But to the story. It is now about 12 M., and as there is no enemy to fight, we turn to the *Minnesota*. We have knocked a hole in her, large enough to admit a wagon and four horses, driving four of her ports into one, and the carnage, in and about her had been dreadful. Of the officers and crew of a steamer alongside, not one remained alive I believe. We considered her *sufficiently* destroyed, a crippled bird, *on the ground*, which we could bag at pleasure. If it was all to go over again (it is *so* easy to be wise *after* the event), I suppose that we would have delayed a few minutes, and burnt her with hot shot, in spite of the pilots. The pilots insisted on *immediate* departure: the alternative being, that they cannot, otherwise, take the ship over the bar, until noon of the next day. To cross on the midnight high tide is impossible. The *Minnesota* is on our port-beam, about a mile off, for, although she drew about the same water that we did, the pilots could never (on account of some peculiarity of the channel) place us closer. If we could have used the hot-shot gun on the port side, the *Minnesota* would undoubtedly have been ablaze in a few moments. But the *Cumberland* had shot away its muzzle. To turn the ship and fight the starboard gun, was impossible, for heading up stream on a strong flood-tide, she would have been wholly unmanageable, baffling around on her heel

and boxing thirty degrees of the compass—from starboard to port and from port to starboard. We *must* hold her, head to tide. “Shift that starboard gun to the port side,” Jones orders, and now it will take the better part of an hour to get the *Minnesota* well ablaze, and then we will lose *this* tide and the *next*. “In a few minutes,” said the extremely importunate pilots, “it will be high water; we have nearly three miles to run to the bar, and if the ship *should* take the ground on a falling tide!!!” We head for Norfolk, and this was the way in which the United States Frigate *Cumberland* saved the United States Frigate *Minnesota*.

The *Virginia* had so lightened up forward, that two or three inches of the hull, below the shield, were plainly exposed, and why the enemy took no advantage of this, is one of the mysteries of the fight. To bring her down by the head at least a foot, to replace an anchor which had been shot away, and which we never missed until ordered to be “let go,” and to replace our broken prow, were important provisions, for our struggle to-morrow, with the *Monitor*, by which time, most probably, she may have screwed her courage to the sticking place and ventured off the shoal.

At the special instance of Flag Officer Buchanan, no captain was ever ordered to the *Virginia*; he desired that no one should be between him and the Executive and Ordnance Officer, who knew the ship from her keel upwards, and who had been made responsible for the efficiency of her battery. Comparatively speaking, a young Lieutenant, Jones, finds himself, in an instant, in command of the leading ship, and in a desperate battle involving possibly the destinies of Empire.

With admirable professional judgment and common sense, he determines, *after beating off the enemy*, and after consulting with his officers, that his seniors should share the dread responsibilities of the hour. And, so, as the crew have been fighting for two days, as his wounded chief is only a few miles off, and as his senior officer, Commodore Tucker, is almost alongside, Jones steams off for Norfolk, and the great fight in Hampton Roads is over. . . .

. In a battle which, revolutionizing as it did in an instant the whole science of naval warfare, is more memorable than any sea-fight of history, more pregnant of consequences—in a battle, which will be remembered to the latest posterity, as the prominent naval event of our times, our ship has come out victorious.

With that last shot at the *Minnesota*, closed her fighting career. The *Patrick Henry* and the *Jamestown* follow. On the previous day, at the first sound of our guns, they had come booming down the river from Mulberry Island, and had rushed into the fight, in the most gallant and effective way. The *Patrick Henry* has received a shot through her boiler; one of her engines is disabled, and she has lost more men than all the rest together. It became necessary to tow her out of the fight, but she soon returned and was actively engaged. In the hottest of the fire the *Virginia* grounded for a few moments, and both ships dashed in to her aid, and how they ever survived that fire, is another mystery of the action; for from all the shore batteries and all the men of war, the *Virginia* was literally bathed in shell and shot—*bañado en municion*. The *Minnesota* alone fired 145 ten-inch; 349 nine-inch and 35 eight-inch shot and shell, and 5,567 pounds of powder. The entire time of all our quarter-masters was consumed in setting and re-setting the colors. Again and again were they shot away, and when the last spare flag staff was "expended" they were rigged to the much be-riddled smoke-stack. Whence they were shot away again and again, and when the fight was over and the *Monitor* had run off, our flag was flying from a boarding-pike, passed up through the spar deck grating. While fighting the men-of-war and shore batteries they manage to find time to blow up a transport steamer, to sink a schooner, and to capture another. They were large, side-wheel passenger steamers, with double walking-beam engines, and were vulnerable almost to a pistol shot. Never were two beautiful ships more gallantly handled. We are off for Norfolk: Barney, who happened to be the last to quit the field, has fired the last gun. It was a weather-bow gun, and the enemy—"they heard the sound, its meaning knew." And did the *Monitor* fire a blank cartridge to windward that day? and if not why not? Was it an *accidental* omission of glorification? *Credat Judicus and other marines*.

Well, the smoke from that triumphant gun was yet floating lazily away, when Catesby Jones remarked to the writer, "the destruction of those wooden vessels was a matter of course especially so, being at anchor, but in not capturing that ironclad, I feel as if we had done nothing." "And yet," he added, "give me that vessel and I will sink this one in twenty minutes." And every watch-officer

of our squadron, would engage, under forfeiture of his head, with a *Monitor* to sink a *Virginia*, every thirty minutes from dawn till dewy eve. And this is said in no spirit of boasting. It only means that they would know the fatally weak point of the *Virginia*, which Worden could scarcely be expected to know by inspiration. Considering the terrible prestige of our ship, and that his junior officers were volunteers (as I suppose), and therefore inexperienced, Worden fought his ship with plenty of spirit. After being temporarily blinded by Hunter Davidson's gun, his responsibility ceased. In other and happier days, we were temporarily shipmates; (in 1849-50 the writer was Judge Advocate of the Pacific Squadron in San Francisco Bay, and upon one or more Courts Martial we served together, he being, if I recollect aright, the junior member); I knew Lieutenant Worden for an amiable, upright, conscientious debt-hating man, and of fair standing as an average deck officer. Never having seen his official report, which, strange to say, was not made till '68—six years after the fight—am wholly unwilling to believe that he has given his sanction to this preposterous claim of "pursuit" and "victory." He would never, I am sure, lend himself to the meanness of claiming *unearned* laurels. While he could fight, he fought gallantly; but he was beaten thoroughly, and it would have been a great novelty in other days for *defeat* to be rewarded by *promotion*. In the political exigency of the hour, which forbade the acknowledgment of defeat by his Government, he was a fortunate man. A Nelson or Collingwood, finding the enemy's upper works invulnerable, might have tried the lower ones; they certainly would have *done something* with the divine inspiration of genius to make the best ship win. But then, Nelsons and Collingwoods only appear every century or two.

I have said that the *Monitor* was fought with plenty of spirit. She was also fought with a "plentiful lack" of judgment and common-sense, and ordnance-sense. The great radical blunder was in failing to *concentrate* her fire. In two instances a second shot striking near the first, weakened our shield and caused the backing to bulge inwards, and made it very manifest that a third or fourth shot would have *gone through*. "But another shot or two from the *Monitor*," writes one of our Lieutenants, "following up two or more that she had placed between my two guns on the starboard side, would have brought down the shield about our ears." In these

cases the shot were delivered upon the strongest part of our roof; if they had struck her at the water-line, where there was no protection whatever for the hull (for be it remembered that she had no knuckle), they would have gone through her as if she had been of paper. A fighting, wide-awake seaman makes the enemy's *water-line* his *first* target and that proving invulnerable, the guns, and the guns' crew the *second*. Now, the enormous weight of her shield and battery, kept the *Virginia*, all the time, just hovering between floating and sinking. She was sluggish, sodden and entirely irresponsible to the breathing of the sea. In a very slight roughening of the water, a sailor could tell in a moment, by the *feel of her*, under his feet, that it was a touch and go matter whether she staid up, or went down; a very few tons of water through the hole made by two, or even one, well-aimed shot from the splendid eleven-inch gun of the *Monitor*, and the *Virginia* would have gone to the bottom in five minutes. With such a gun, and at such short range, it would be no great feat for an intelligent side-boy to plant his shot *every time* in the space covered by an ordinary straw-hat. The *Virginia* was so large a mark that almost every shot struck her *somewhere*; but they were scattered over the whole shield and on both sides, and were therefore harmless. To point her gun in our direction, and fire on the instant, *without aim or motive*, appeared to be the object. The turret revolving rapidly, the gun disappears only to repeat in five or six minutes, the same hurried and necessarily aimless, unmeaning fire; not a shot appeared to have any '*motif*.' They appeared to be firing at "Cows and a market." She could assume and keep whatever position she pleased, for, with her short keel and fine engines, she could play around us like a rabbit around a sloth. Once during the fight she took such a position that we could not bring a single gun to bear on her. Why did she not with common-sense keep it, and with perfect security deliberately plant her shot where she pleased almost to an inch? She fired, all told, during the fight forty-one shots (taking her time, about one fire in six minutes), and any three of them properly aimed would have sunk us, and yet the nearest shot to the water-line was over four feet. Our rudder and propeller were wholly unprotected, and a slight blow from her stem would have disabled both and ended the fight. Every time the *Virginia* went to cruise in the Roads

under Tatnall we bade her an affectionate good-bye—we never expected to see her again. In short, considering that at noon on the 8th of March, '62, the *Monitor*, was by *immense odds*, the most formidable vessel of war on this planet, and that our ship was comparatively a *ship of glass*, and that doing us *no harm* (for our crew never suffered so much as a finger ache from the *Monitor's* fire), and wholly unharmed herself, after four mortal hours of battle she runs away and gives us the fight, it is impossible to conceive in what manner she *could have been more inefficiently handled*. On the other hand, the *Monitor* might have thrown her guns over-board and have flooded her magazine, and in spite of all that daring and genius could do, at the end of a week, or a month, or a year, would have been as far from capture as she was at the moment of “hauling off into shoal water.”

We are now at Norfolk, and will any one ever forget that Sunday afternoon ovation to our glory-covered sailors—a whole people wild with delight? Or can any one ever forget the scene aboard the *Virginia* on the following Tuesday, when all hands were assembled on the quarter-deck to return thanks to Almighty God for this great victory and deliverance; the tears and sobs of both officers and men; or the burning words of the eloquent divine—Wingfield, the present Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Texas. How our President, that “very noblest Roman of them all,” announced the glad tidings in one of those exquisite compositions, which for force of language and classical elegance and purity, are wholly unsurpassable? Or, how Congress voted thanks and promotion? Or, can we forget that our victory sent a thrill of gladness through the hearts of our people, then staggering under so many reverses, such as was not exceeded by any single success of the War? Nor do we forget that to this very hour, “I fought in Hampton Roads” is an *open sesame* to the hearts and homes of all our own countrymen. Ah! the thrilling memories of those halcyon days.

“There are some strokes of calamity which scathe and scorch the soul; which penetrate to the vital seat of happiness, and blast it never again to put forth bud or blossom.” And so, we, crushed to the earth, as we admit, by the agonizing thought that we have no country *now*; (eternally infamous be the cowards who still oppress her); broken in health, broken in fortune, broken-hearted, utterly,

hopelessly. Life all broken up, aimless—weary; for since that dreadful day of April, '65.

“There's nothing serious in mortality :
All is but toys: Renown and Grace is dead.
The wine of Life is drawn; and naught but lees
Is left this vault to brag of”—

More than willing since that day of doom, and between any two ticks of the clock, to join our envied brothers—that noble army of martyrs, who left us on the battle field for the Spirit land, (where so soon now they will welcome us all) and, yet, in the consciousness of duty performed, of self-respect maintained, in the now proved certainty that we were right, and in a thousand glorious recollections of our struggle, we have many and many a cheerful moment. And to none of those hope-tinted hours

“In the land where we were dreaming,”

does memory more delightedly recur, than to those early days of March, 1862. Ah me! how earnestly, how feelingly, how tearfully do we say of them: *Et hæc olim meminisse juvabit.*

And our ship. She's “by the head” again, to twenty-three feet forward, has a new anchor, a new wrought-iron prow, a new set of boats, the two port shutters repaired, and plenty of solid shot and bolts; and as soon as her new captain reaches her deck (Commodore Tatnall—I never think of the gallant “old chieftain” without mentally ordering to his memory, a “present-arms,”) she is off to find that “pursuing” *Monitor*, and she never found her. Where was she? Echo answers “where,” and likewise a brave boatswain's-mate, who worshipped at the shrine of the Wide Water-street muse, and as the classic poet of the fo'castle, irreverently wrote:—

“Supra mud-flattibus,
Monitoribus fugattibus,
Non est come-atibus
Virginianibus!”

While roaming about the Monitor-less Roads in triumph, the *Virginia* was a powerful support to Magruder at Yorktown. I have often heard my gallant Chief say that she was his “right wing, and was equal to five thousand men.” (General John Bankhead Magru-

der—and at the name of as true and unselfish a gentleman, and of as gallant a soldier as ever adorned the profession of arms—let the drums roll.) It was largely, if not chiefly, owing to her material and moral support that we kept McClellan in check—eight thousand men against a splendidly appointed army of one hundred and twenty thousand. It gave us time to concentrate our forces around Richmond, where so soon after we beat them so terribly. Up to this time I have not seen the fights around Richmond, manufactured into Yankee victories, but I am looking for that fabric every day. What were those “vast interests” which the *Monitor* was protecting in her “defensive rôle?” And how did they weigh when compared with the *actual, positive, tangible* damage which the *Virginia* was doing their cause? If that splendid invention (as we freely admit she was, for smooth water), had been fought as she ought to have been, it might have saved them fifty thousand men. Engaging our handful with a few brigades, McClellan might have walked past us to Richmond with the rest of his army almost any morning before breakfast.

Having accomplished our object which was to check McClellan, our armies fell back from Yorktown and Norfolk, and Commodore Tatnall ordered all our light-draught-vessels to Drury’s Bluff, viz: the *Patrick Henry*, *Jamestown*, *Teaser*, *Beaufort*, and *Raleigh*, under Tucker, Barney, Webb, Parker and Alexander. Possibly we might have taken the *Virginia* as far as Harrison’s Bar, but such action would have been absurd from every point of view. As the enemy occupied both sides of the river, *above* and *below*, we could neither coal nor provision her, and would have been compelled to destroy her in a few days, if she remained so long uncaptured. Her officers and crew were more usefully employed than in holding in a narrow shoal river a ship which required an inland sea to move in. It was suggested that we abandon her to the enemy, and after they had indulged in a sufficient amount of exultation, that Taylor Wood (our young Nelson) should slip out late some afternoon and sink her with the *Torpedo* or *Teaser* (one-gun tugs); but it was regarded as a species of ingratitude to allow the flag which she had done so much to humble, to float over her for a single moment.

And now the narrative is drawing to a close, for it is the 10th of May, and one mile distant W.S.W. bears Craney Island.

“This was her journey’s end
The butt and very sea-mark of her utmost sail.”

Her mission was accomplished, her work was done and here was she to receive her death-blow and burial at the hands of her own people. And so, landing the crew, whom we marched to Drury's Bluff through Richmond (where a few days later they beat the *Monitor* off again, and who as they fell in and formed on the beach that night continually looked for, but more continually never saw that "pursuing" *Monitor*)—then and there, on the very field of her fame, within sight of the *Cumberland's* top-gallant masts all awash—within sight of that magnificent fleet still cowering on the shoal, with her laurels all fresh and green, we hauled down her drooping colors, and with mingled pride and grief, we gave her to the flames. Now the lambent fires are roaring around the shotted guns, and

"Then shook the hills with thunder riven,
Then louder than the bolts of heaven
Far flashed the red artillery"—

the slow-match—the magazine—and that last deep, low, sullen, mournful boom has rolled to the very sympathising stars, and in muttered thunders told her fate; and it told her own people, now far away on the march, that, unprofaned by the touch of the hated foe, our gallant ship had passed away.

"So lived—so died she,"

and her glory and renown shall live in song and story until Time shall be no more, and as long as love of country, devotion to duty, wisdom in council and heroism in battle are honored among men—so long shall the gentle fair with thrilling hearts listen to the brave and the true, as they tell of the gallant spirits who fought the Confederate States war-ship, the *Virginia*, to immortality—to a glorious, *ever brightening* immortality.

And *Virginia* was her name, not *Merrimac*, which has a nasal twang equally abhorrent to sentiment and to melody, and meanly compares with the sonorous sweetness of "*Virginia*." She fought under Confederate colors, and her fame belongs to all of us; but there was a peculiar fitness in the name we gave her. *In Virginia*, of Virginia iron and wood, and *by Virginians* was she built, and *in Virginia's* waters, now made classic by her exploits, she made a record which shall live forever. Of her officers a large proportion were Virginians. From Maryland were Admiral Buchanan, Lieut.

John Taylor Wood, and Chief-Engineer Ramsay; and well may we be especially proud of the contribution of our dear old State, "our Maryland." Of the three leading ships in the great fight two were commanded by Marylanders: Buchanan and Barney, in the *Virginia* and *Jamestown*. From Georgia were Commodore Tatnall and one of the assistant engineers, I regret that I cannot remember his name; from Missouri, Midshipman Marmaduke; from Tennessee, Midshipman Foute; from Kentucky, Midshipman Craig, and from Virginia were Catesby Jones, Charles Simms, Hunter Davidson, Robert Minor, John R. Eggleston and Walter Butt, *all* the Lieutenants; Midshipmen Littlepage, Rootes and Long; Paymaster Jas. Semple; Surgeons Dinwiddie Phillips and A. S. Garnett; Marine Officer Reuben Thom; five out of the six assistant-engineers; Signal Officer Lieut. George E. Tabb, and all five of the pilots. Of the nineteen officers who fought her through her *Monitor* fight, fifteen were of Virginia. Well may the grand old mother of States and Statesmen be proud of the record of her children—her daughters as of her sons. On the sea as on the land their Confederate loyalty and zeal were conspicuous, and especially does every valley and hill-top on the battle-scarred bosom of their political Mother tell, trumpet-tongued, of their filial valor and devotion. Honored and respected in life, in death their ashes shall repose among their well-loved people, and their names now already become "household words," shall be cherished in affectionate remembrance through many a generation yet unborn.

God save the Old Dominion, and all true Virginians, and God d—on't save the wretched handful of her surviving naval and military renegades, thick-skinned fellows in eternal exile, whom remorse and the slow-moving finger of scorn have not, *as yet*, marked down into Yankee-dug graves.

And just here, I would dwell for a moment upon the peculiarly grateful relations, which, as Marylanders, we hold to our Southern brothers—relations so "hallowed and so gracious." They remind us, in kindly tones, that because of being forced to struggle through the enemy's lines, to reach the Confederate colors, we were in a peculiar degree isolated from our homes and friends. (But for the infamous arrest of her Legislature, the State, by the absolutely unanimous voice of her people *on that day*, would, in a few hours, have been wheeled into line with her Southern Sisters.) Our South-

ern brothers tell us, that *wherever* Confederate bugles blew, the notes reached the listening ears of Marylanders; that *wherever* it adorned and hallowed the landscape, our beautiful flag looked down upon Marylanders, who, in turn, looked up to it, their eyes beaming with love and devotion; that *wherever* the day-light air was startled with the crash and roar of battle, in the thickest of the smoke and close to the colors, were men who were then illustrating the glories of the "old Maryland line;" and when

"Our bugles sang Truce, for the night-clouds had lowered
And the sentinel stars set their watch in the sky,"

they looked down upon Maryland's dead and dying. We take no pride in these flattering words,—none whatever. The Cause was ours as much as theirs, and called for the same sacrifices, even to the going down into the grave. But when they tell us of what Maryland has done *since* the war—that weeping with them tear for tear, they gave themselves up wholly to alleviate their sorrows, nursing their shattered bodies, and whispering comfort to their bleeding, broken hearts; pouring over them a flood tide of loving tenderness and sympathy, which has known no ebb to this hour; when they tell us that even on the busy mart where "merchants most do congregate," where hard sharp lines of trade prevail, there has been a generous rivalry as to who should first say, "shattered by the losses and calamities of desolating war, sit down quickly, and write thy debt acquitted." When they tell us, in the language of Gov. Vance, of North Carolina, that, our beautiful Baltimore "has become a very Mecca to every true Southern heart,"—*then* it is, I say, that thrilling with pride in our holy cause—(that cause, which, through those four dreadful years of physical hardship and suffering and mental agony, was upheld with a patience and a devotion of which, we, its soldiers, are not ashamed,) thrilling with pride in our grand old State and her glorious history and traditions—pride in our noble City, her fair women and brave men—we tremble with emotion—we shall have been "flattered to tears."

By what process of reasoning Commodore Parker extracts such a quantity of sentimental semi-religious sop out of the fight, I can not comprehend. The quality is much to be envied. Extracting sunbeams out of cucumbers is nothing to it.

Now, "Providence," whatever that is, was in this war, as usual,

on that side having the heaviest artillery, and having with open ports the most money with which to entice foreign hirelings, with Dutchmen, for example, at \$2,000 a head bounty. (This, the sole cause of our defeat.) But, if ever there was an exception to the Napoleonic Maxim, this was it. The *Monitor* only appears upon the scene *after* that, we have been upon the rampage for a whole day—have cleared out everything in the Roads: men-of-war, transports, traders; we *have* done the enemy all possible injury, material and moral. Stocks fall ten per cent. in an hour; gold rises faster and such a panic pervades all Yankeedom, as they never knew before or since, and then next day, when we come to fight the *Monitor*—Noah's ark against the crack iron-clad of the British channel fleet, we beat her off, undeniably, and forever, of which fact the French and British men-of-war were witnesses. Without stopping to comment on that characteristic so peculiarly Yankee, which arrogantly assumes with self-righteous, holier-than-thou airs, that Providence must be necessarily and *ex officio* on whatever side he may happen to espouse, one would think that always fighting us twelve to one in point of numbers, and one hundred to one in point of resources, they would be content with the odds and let Providence alone *Sed de gustibus, etc.* Now, we thanked Providence (or ought) for helping us to beat the *Monitor*, and I cannot conceive what the *Monitors* gave thanks for, except for their escape. It must be very embarrassing to Providence to be thanked by *both* sides for victory—carrying water on both shoulders, as it were. Providence could not possibly have done more for us than to lift us to ten feet draught of water, *or* give us three or four knots more speed that we might have caught the *Monitor*. There are grave doubts whether Providence could do it, but assuming that she could, with such an enormous weight of roof and battery, and with such engines as those, we did not ask it: the requisite cheek was wanting. Believing, however, that Providence took no sides in the fight, I am forced to attribute the flight of the *Monitor* to other causes. Possibly the horrors of the Libby prison had something to do with it. I weary to death under this snuffing cant of Providential interference. Before the war, we Southern men, *as a nation*, carried our colors, in the great battle of life, as far to the front as Northern men did; we so carry them now. How we carried them in actual battle, their own records tell. "We were entitled to say the least, to be regarded as fighting for a principle as much as

themselves—We had all to lose and nothing to gain. We were as competent to select the path which manhood, duty, patriotism and honor required us to follow. And we *know* that we selected aright; for though we could look down the stream of time, and see all the agony, ruin and humiliation which would await us at the end, we would follow the same path without a moment's hesitation. We would only so change that by intensifying our effort, *other* half million of our wicked and cowardly invaders should be welcomed with hospitable hands to bloody graves. Gushing politicians to the contrary notwithstanding,

“*Never* can true reconciliation grow
Where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep.”

Commodore Parker thinks that “what injuries the *Virginia* sustained will probably never be known.” He can learn the truth from hundreds of witnesses; there never was any secret about it. They were almost nothing, and she was ready for action within five minutes after reaching her dock.

It would seem to be very clear that no such dreadful injuries could befall the ship, without some greater or less harm to the crew, and yet not one drop of Confederate blood, was shed in the fight. Our surgeons were utterly scandalised and brought all to naught, for the *official record* shows that on the 8th March our casualties were absolutely *nil*—0—not so much as a sprain, or a bruise, or a finger ache or a nose bleeding—not so much as a splinter for a fine cambric needle. In the cramped and crowded condition of our gun deck, a rifle ball even, would have done no little execution. No missile so large entered any of our ten large ports, although the *Monitor's* fire was often delivered at half pistol shot distance, and frequently the ships were nearly touching. Among the many mysteries of the fight, this was perhaps the most remarkable. (What an immense field for “Prov.” lucubration.) Not more remarkable, however, than the least mendacious Yankee account of the fight which I have seen, and in a book, aspiring to the dignity and truthfulness of history.

“Neither produced the slightest effect upon the other, until at last, the *Monitor* sent a shell through the port hole of her antagonist doing severe execution among the crew. After that the *Merrimac*

retreated leaving the victory with the little *Monitor*." (Young Folks' History.) *Oh tempora! Oh mores!* There *was* much abrasion of the wood-work about the stem, where she had rammed the *Monitor*; a number of dents in the shield more or less deep, and in one or two places the iron was ripped off, and the smoke-stack riddled. During the fight an alarming leak was reported, but it was soon discovered and stopped. These and the injuries named were wholly immaterial as regards her fighting capacity: whether great or small she was always ready for action, and the greater her injuries the less excuse for the *Monitor* to decline the daily-proffered battle.

With regard to the rhetorical flourish as to what "Earl Russell thought," and "Europe thought," "the political significance of the victory," etc., this is all *vox et preterea nihil*. At the time the most "trooly loil" claimed no victory; not even the *Monitors* themselves. Every man of them knows in his secret heart that his ship was whipped. It was an accepted defeat. The public prints, contemporaneous literature, the stock and gold markets, all prove it. True, the enemy managed to find some solace from the survival of the *Monitor*, but it was after this manner to wit: that *if* there had been no *Monitor*, that *then* the *Virginia* might have achieved that terrible career aforesaid. The most puerile and vapid of *non sequiturs* of course, but it was all the extractable comfort *at the time*. For supposing the *Virginia*, manned by idiots or traitors, to have been run seaward past Cape Henry (there to founder in the first few moments, upon the first few heaves of a sleeping sea), the *Monitor* would have been no hindrance—no greater than a Portuguese man-of-war. For she was playing a "defensive rôle" (to absolute perfection), and the approved mode of playing it, is your enemy drawing four to swing to your anchors in two fathoms of water. You cannot play a "defensive rôle" and a fighting and a "pursuing" rôle at *the same time*. It was only *gradually* that the story of the fight was woven into Northern school-books as a "drawn battle." In this article for the first time I have seen it claimed as a Federal victory. With great pomp and circumstance, and in many honied words the muster-roll of the *Monitor* is held up to the admiring gaze of their countrymen. If there is a man among them who does not blush at the false position assigned him in this article—at being thus pilloried for a mock hero, then must the modesty of such man be under very splendid command.

Earl Russell most probably neither thought nor cared about the fight. The British neutrality policy had been determined upon long before; and assuming that he had been humbugged into the belief that the *Monitor* had not been beaten, the affair had not a feather's political weight one way or the other. The English were accurately informed as to military operations on both sides, but in this case they had special means of knowing the exact truth. I cannot remember distinctly, whether or not the British man-of-war was in the Roads on the 8th of March, and with her own eyes, saw the *Monitor* run up on the shoal and *stay there*, (I know that the Frenchman saw it all and so reported), but she was certainly there early in April, for I remember this incident. Barney's prizes, cut out in the hope that in very shame the *Monitor* would come out and fight us in the channel, were passing near the British ship *en route* to Norfolk. Entirely ignoring their neutrality obligations and all the the pretty proprieties, unable to restrain their generous impulses, from the captain to the side-boy, they cheered our gunboat to the very echo. I seem to hear again, those rousing, ringing British cheers, at this very moment. To a man, the English army and navy were with us, and not having the fear of the Yankee before their eyes, lost no opportunity of publicly showing their sympathy and respect. But they saw, alas! that Barney's gallantry was thrown away, and that the *Monitor* with her *steam up* still hugged the shoal and utterly refused the gage of battle so handsomely thrown down. Now the "political significance" of this "victory" of the *Monitor* could scarcely have so overwhelmed Earl Russell. And again, early in May a magnificent Federal fleet (the *Virginia* being concealed behind the land), have ventured across the channel and some of them expressly fitted to destroy our ship, are furiously bombarding our batteries at Sewell's Point. Dashing down comes old Tatnall on the instant, as light-stepping and blithe as a boy. With such terrible odds they will surely fight us now; though we could not have survived the shock for sixty seconds, either from the fire or from the ramming. But the *Virginia* no sooner draws into range than the whole fleet, like a flushed covey of birds, flutters off into shoal water and under the guns of the forts. *Every vessel runs, and we cannot fire a single shot.* Says one of our Lieutenants: "There were seven or eight vessels besides the *Monitor*—heavy steam Frigates several of them—in line of battle, and throwing shells

into Sewell's Point. We heard at the time, that it was by way of entertaining Mr. Lincoln, who was at Fortress Monroe. At any rate they *all ran*, when they saw us coming, in a way that made me blush for the navy in which I had served so long." We chase until we can almost hail the gunners on the Rip Raps, who were pouring a splendid fire into her—remarkably splendid from its rapidity and precision. A few lengths of the cable will put us ashore. *Pari passu* the squadron retreat, and are far beyond our range. But see! they are now huddling together between the forts, and are only waiting to make a grand combined onslaught. Vain hope! the weary hours roll by; the crew are yawning at their guns, cursing their luck, ("the defensive rôle") and growling like old sea bears for the "roll to grog," and we rest like "a painted ship upon a painted ocean." "Tucker," hailed the old Commodore in a tone of the deepest disgust, and relapsing into his rheumatic limp, "what can we do! what can we do!" but "it's of no use, they'll *never* fight us; send me a boat, I'll go up in your ship and examine my morning's mail." "Mr. Jones, fire a gun to windward and take the ship back to her buoy." There was *no further bombardment of our batteries*, nor did that splendid squadron again leave the protection of the guns at Old Point, until *they saw* by the debris sweeping seaward on the tides, that the *Virginia* was no more. This "victory" of the *Monitor*, as seen and reported by the British ship, could hardly have so stunned Lord Russel with its "political significance." Nor could it have been her victory at Drury's Bluff a few days later, when with the *Galena* and others she dashed up against our batteries only to be hurled back utterly beaten and discomfited. What victory was it then that frightened all Europe from its propriety by its "political significance"? Not that it has, even if true, the remotest bearing upon the question at issue (which is, which vessel whipped, the *Monitor* or the *Virginia*?); but if it shall turn out that the whole paragraph is mere dashing assertion, mere "wild and whirling words," why then—*ex uno disce omnes*. The allusion to Earl Russell appears to be unfortunate. If rumors be true, his humiliation at the back down of England in the *Alabama* case is the sorrow which is clouding his few remaining years. But what Europe really *did* know, was, that we fought long and well for our country; and *we*

know, that we were true to our convictions; that all our military renegades can be counted on the fingers of one hand, with one finger and-a-half to spare; and we in Maryland know, that hooting at "pardons" and glorying in "disabilities," we shall remain consistent and true and faithful unto the end. Aye, glorying in our "disabilities" happy to share, though ever so little, in malignant hate with which they honor our President—truest of the true, purest of the pure, bravest of the brave! And their hate is natural and has a two-fold origin. First, because, *Proprium humani ingenii est, odisse quem laeseris*, and the historic records of the last half of the Nineteenth Century shall be blotted with no such damning infamy as that which tells of the treatment of President Davis after his capture. And second, because he has fairly earned their hate. His lion-like intrepid spirit which in trumpet tones, breathes only contempt and defiance to this hour, cheered and sustained our fire until the very last moment. Fewer by 10,000 would have been the "head board" demand but for his single individual heroic will. Their *very* most venomous and most hissing curses--

"He won them well, and may he wear them long."

And *we* know how earnest we were, for we read every day the United States Quartermaster's advertisement for "head-boards," the sweetest reading since Cadmus invented letters. The style—tho' a trifle monotonous, so intensely terse and vivid and the figures! *so* magnificent. And by this we know that we have filled 300,000 graves with our accursed invaders, which blessed be God, we stand on and which we never "decorate," and pointing to which we bid our children *watch and wait*.

To conclude. "In every Federal account of the operations of the war, an antidote should accompany the poison, page by page, line by line." To this effect was the language of my old friend and school-mate Mr. Teackle Wallis, *tried and true*, in his address to the Southern Historical Society; and could there possibly be a clearer illustration of the truth and wisdom of the words than in the necessity for this reply to the article "Monitor and Merrimack"?

WILLIAM NORRIS, COL.

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